

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT STAFF PAPER NUMBER 6**

# **VITAL RECORDS**

**NOVEMBER 1969**

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RECORDS MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

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managing emergency preparedness files

**FEDERAL  
VITAL RECORDS  
PROGRAM**



1968

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL RECORDS CENTERS

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## FOREWORD

To put the Federal vital records program in its proper perspective, it must be remembered that its entire purpose is to protect that core of records (information) deemed necessary to ensure continuity of essential Governmental activities during and following national emergency conditions, including a possible enemy nuclear attack upon the United States.

The continuity of Government program was initiated on the Federal level by Executive Order 10346 of April 17, 1952. Under this order each Federal department and agency was made responsible for placing itself as soon as possible in such a position that it could carry out its essential functions in an emergency.

The continuity of Government program includes, among other things, the development and maintenance of a program for the protection of vital records so that such records would be available at the time and place where they would be needed.

Leadership and coordination for overall emergency preparedness resides in the Office of Emergency Planning, acting on behalf of the President. Section 304 of Executive Order 11051 of September 27, 1962, specifies that OEP shall develop policies and plans to assure the continuity of essential Federal Government activities through a variety of programs providing, among other things, for safekeeping of essential records.

Emergency preparedness responsibilities of the General Services Administration in the area of records management are set forth in Executive Order 11093 of February 26, 1963. Section 2(e) of this order directs GSA to "provide instructions and advice on appraisal, selection, preservation, arrangement, reference, reproduction, storage and salvage of essential records needed for the operation of the Federal Government after attack, on an emergency basis including a decentralized system."

Designed to assist Federal records officers, defense coordinators, and others concerned with emergency preparedness, this handbook suggests some of the factors and methods that should be considered in developing and operating vital records protection programs. It supersedes the 1958 edition of the GSA Records Management Handbook entitled "Protecting Vital Operating Records."

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## 1. DEFINITIONS AND BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

As part of planning for national survival, the vital records program augments related emergency preparedness programs assigned by law or executive order to virtually every department and agency of the Federal Government.

To achieve optimum status of the program on a continuing Government-wide basis, each Federal executive department and agency is responsible for selecting and safeguarding that body of information which would be most useful to its own essential emergency and recovery functions. This means that each must establish and maintain its own vital records program.

Let's start by providing some definitions of terms.

### Vital Records

This term is synonymous with "essential records," "emergency preparedness records," "indispensable records," "relocation records," and several other terms denoting records vital to facilitating continuity of Government activities under national emergency conditions.

### Emergency Operating Records

This category of vital records relates to the essential functions of the Government for the duration of an emergency if this country is attacked, and comprises organization and manning records (readiness) as well as substantive and procedural records basic to implementation of emergency operations. They are the records that would be needed immediately, that should normally be prepositioned at emergency alternate or relocation sites, and that should normally be in the form of paper copies so that they could be used (read) directly without reliance on enlarging or other equipment. Protection of this category is of prime importance. Such records include those necessary to:

1. The military effort of the Nation—the operation of the Armed Forces;
2. The mobilization and protection of the material and manpower resources of the Nation;
3. The maintenance of public health, safety, and order; the conduct of essential civil defense activities.

### Rights and Interests Records

This category of vital records relates to the preservation of rights and interests of individual citizens and of the Government. They need not necessarily be kept at alternate sites, as they would not normally be needed immediately,

nor need they be kept in readable paper form.

The central theme of this handbook is that a formal vital records program, reflecting top management support, is needed within each Federal executive department and agency to fulfill this aspect of emergency preparedness. It should be designed to achieve optimum capability in this area within budgetary limitations.

The cost and complexity of work that would ensure the availability of every document that might be needed would be prohibitive. It is particularly important that the program be kept on a practical basis because:

1. It is an essential part of the preparedness program designed to ensure the continuity of Government under the most adverse circumstances. Overall preparedness will be found wanting to the extent that necessary information is not available when it is most needed;
2. There is every reason to expect that this program must be kept current for an indefinite period of time. If it is overly elaborate, cumbersome, or costly, inevitably it will not be kept up. The procedures for ensuring that vital records will be available must be made routine.

The Federal program herein set forth is based on certain ground rules that have been generally accepted as valid. These basic assumptions, applicable to State and local governments and industry as well, are that:

1. The best and most accessible storage space available, in terms of possible nuclear attack, should be used to safeguard vital records. Consideration should also be given to use of the best available equipment when dispersion is used as a key protective measure;
2. The need for duplication of records varies according to the value of the records, the normal distribution of copies, and the relative safety of the places to which the copies are distributed;
3. Providing special alternate sites for emergency operations in non-target areas is perhaps the most practical means of providing protection, with the realization at the same time that the hitherto nontarget areas may become targets as soon

as valuable material is moved into them;

4. A calculated risk must be taken with regard to certain records of lesser value than those identified as vital records; and

5. Each Federal executive depart-

ment and agency affected is responsible for planning and putting into effect action necessary to protect its own vital records. The department or agency actions necessary to establish and maintain a vital records program are depicted in figure 1.

## PROGRAM ELEMENTS

1. Delegate agencywide program responsibility to a headquarters official, and designate a network of liaison officers to implement the program in the field;

2. Develop basic principles and guidelines to be followed, covering elements such as program responsibilities, location of operations (concentrated or dispersed), and records to be safeguarded;

3. Develop and issue to agency officials involved an establishment directive outlining plans for unified management of the program, including guidelines and procedures for the selection, collection, inventorying, transferring, protecting, and otherwise maintaining the vital records;

4. Preposition the vital records at operational or other safe locations, providing any necessary equipment to use machine-coded or micro-filmed records; and

5. Indoctrinate all agency personnel concerned with maintenance and operation of the vital records program.

Figure 1. Program Elements for Vital Records

## 2. WHAT RECORDS ARE VITAL?

Standards for identifying the vital records of a department or agency cannot be established except in very general terms.

The key to identifying the records in the emergency operating category, already defined, is obvious. Essentially only records necessary to the conduct of emergency functions of a substantive nature are involved, although those covering organization, assignment of specific responsibilities and duties, delegation of authority, succession to command, and related emergency readiness matters are included. However, the determination as to whether or not a given record is vital and which category it fits is often a difficult decision to make. Certain records may fall within both the emergency operating and rights and interests categories.

Much of what most employees do from day to day would not be done in an emergency. Everyone tends quite often to forget this, and it is necessary constantly to remind ourselves.

Normally in identifying the vital records of a department or agency either one of two approaches can be used:

1. A complete inventory is compiled, showing all records touching on emergency functions, and then a selection is made from them of the records to be safeguarded; or

2. A careful study is made of how functions would be carried out under emergency conditions, and then on the basis of such a study a listing is made of what records would be required.

In either case the only practical way to determine the completeness of the selection is through a test under simulated emergency conditions.

The first of these alternatives might at a glance seem the surer, but that is not always true. In using the inventory method alone, there is a tendency to earmark entire series of records for duplicating although actually only a few papers in the file are essential.

The difficulty in the second method is, of course, obvious. It is difficult enough to imagine the conditions under which emergency functions would be carried out because we are too used to telephones, files, easy trans-



portation, and consultation. It is even more difficult to imagine what records would be vital in carrying out the work to be done under emergency conditions.

It cannot be overemphasized that in identifying vital records the records themselves must be evaluated only in regard to their essentiality in carrying out emergency functions or in protecting rights or interests. The person making the selection is not concerned with the archival or research value of the files. Many records currently being safeguarded have no lasting value, but their value at the onset of an emergency can hardly be questioned.

Lists or payrolls of persons receiving pensions are not of much enduring value after the statutory period for claims has run. Nevertheless, these records would be vital in maintaining or reestablishing the flow of cash through the economic system of the country in the event of an emergency.

On the other hand, experience has indicated that certain personnel are so familiar with existing problem areas and carry so much program knowledge in their heads that they have not given sufficient attention to records which should be at the relocation site. They overlook the twin facts that in time of emergency they themselves may not reach the relocation site, and that people not so well acquainted with their activities may have to take over. Records at the site should be usable by others.

In identifying vital records, as might be expected, there are a few types that almost every department or agency evaluates in about the same way:

### **General Management Records**

Vital records include statements of mission in an emergency, plans and programs for carrying out this mission, statements of delegations of authority and of succession to command, any predrafted regulations or announcements to be issued immediately upon the onset of an emergency, action programs that may have been drafted in skeleton form, information as to the whereabouts of vital records, information about agency personnel, property, and activities sufficient to provide a basis for damage assessments, and similar information on essential emergency functions. Copies of basic legislation, regulations, and procedures are often included, even though many of these would be rendered at least temporarily inoperative in an emergency.

### **Personnel Records**

Among the personnel records most frequently designated as vital, in addition to lists of key employees assigned emergency duties, are

rosters of employees (often in the form of a telephone directory or a copy of the payroll) and rosters of employees' skills that might be useful during and following an emergency. Of prime importance, of course, in time of emergency would be information as to which employees were available for duty and which were casualties, but such information must be obtained through a prearranged reporting system rather than through storage or security copies of records.

### **Legal Rights Records**

In general a distinction has been drawn between records that support legal rights which might be reestablished through affidavit and which are well known to those involved, and records of legal rights maintained by the Federal Government as the statutory office of record, particularly if it is unrealistic to expect those involved to know the details of the records.

Real estate titles, for example, have in the past been reestablished after loss of records, and usually departments and agencies know what real estate the Government owns. Furthermore, there are inventories of Federal land holdings, with copies dispersed in various locations. Finally, the Federal Government is not the office of record for real estate titles; they are registered in local court houses, many of which would almost certainly escape relatively unharmed in an emergency. For these reasons Federal agencies have not tried to safeguard title papers to federally-owned land. Affidavits and other records that might survive an emergency should be sufficient to reestablish title.

Where the Federal Government is the office of record for legal rights—citizenship, for example—it has a primary responsibility for their protection. Few people know the amount of their equity in retirement funds, so the necessary records to protect this equity have been safeguarded. Most Federal departments and agencies have also taken steps to protect the rights of their employees to earned leave and to pay due them through safeguarding copies of periodic payrolls and key leave records.

### **Fiscal Records**

There has been no effort to provide vital record copies of all the fiscal records of the Government simply because it would be too unwieldy and expensive.

Most departments and agencies have safeguarded copies of periodic summaries of their financial status, records of significant amounts of money due to the Government, and records of certain debts owed by the Government. For the most part, however, no effort has been

made to safeguard copies of all fiscal records relating to procurement; it is up to the seller to preserve what he might need to prove his claim.

On the other hand, the Government tries to safeguard a record of loans it has made in order to collect, if collection would be possible after an emergency. In its handling of fiscal records the same factors and motivation prevail in the Federal Government as in state and local governments and in private industry. Owing to differences in the respective missions of Government and private industry, however, different records are chosen.

### **Industrial Records**

The Federal Government operates many kinds of industrial establishments, and in such establishments the key records are the same as are to be found in private industry.

Engineering drawings, explanations of complex industrial processes, lists of suppliers of items and materials not everywhere available, and similar records are carefully safeguarded.

### **Assigned Mission Records**

In determining what are indispensable records of activities peculiar to individual departments and agencies, each must of course make its own decision in the light of the emergency mission for which it is responsible. The records designated will be greatly influenced, however, by whether the emergency mission is simply a continuation of a normal peacetime program or is instead a completely or nearly completely new program, such as price control, which is not a normal function.

If the emergency mission represents continuation of a normal program, copies of those rec-

ords that show the current status of the program should be safeguarded.

Records showing the location of stocks of medical and other supplies may be of the utmost importance; records of building construction and of public utility systems may be essential for repair and rescue work as well as for determining the relative safety of structures still standing.

Basically, departments and agencies will want to provide vital record copies of summary information needed to continue and expand going programs.

On the other hand, if the emergency mission, or a part of it, consists of the administration of a program not a part of normal Government functions, background material as to how the work was done in previous emergencies, or how it should be done, should be safeguarded.

A small stock of forms used to accomplish the mission, reports required, regulations, procedures, and, particularly, critical evaluations of the success of comparable predecessor programs, would be vital.

Such materials may often be available in printed or published form rather than as manuscripts. Regardless of form, they will be all important in getting the program off to a fast and effective start.

There are additional problems in correlating the selection of vital records by central offices and field offices of agencies. As a rule, there is no need to safeguard the same information from both places. If a pension roll is being safeguarded centrally, field offices need not protect the same information at each field location. On the other hand, a certain amount of duplicate information is required at central offices and field offices.

## **3. METHODS FOR PROVIDING VITAL RECORD COPIES**

Most often vital records are maintained as duplicate copies. The methods employed to protect vital records vary from department to department and from agency to agency, but essentially they involve combinations of four expedients:

### **Reliance on Existing Duplicates at Other Locations**

Almost all departments and agencies rely to some extent on duplicate sets of documents already on file at separate locations within their own organization, in other agencies, or

even in non-governmental institutions to which they would have access in time of emergency. These documents are regularly added to as a part of everyday business. This has been termed "built in dispersal." In some instances the whereabouts of these duplicates is well known; usually field offices have copies of all of an agency's directives, regulations, organization charts, and the like. In other instances only a handful of employees are even vaguely aware of the existence of the program for the protection of vital records, and therefore only that handful have even thought in terms of the existence and preservation of duplicates in field office files.

### **Provision of Duplicates for Storage at Another Location**

In most instances duplicates are assembled specifically for storage in emergency alternate or relocation sites, or at other security locations. This has been called "improvised dispersal." The volume of these records normally is not such as to create a space problem. Such duplicates are usually prepared simultaneously with other records in regular day-to-day operations for periodic transfer to security storage.

### **Provision for Copies of Existing Records**

Many departments and agencies have undertaken programs for making copies of existing records, either because there are existing accumulations of vital records of which no extra copies are available or because the nature of the record makes it impracticable to create it in multiple copies. Examples of the first type of records are construction drawings for public utilities constructed in the past; examples of the second are records of certain loans.

Copies are made by various methods, depending on the quantity of records to be copied and on the nature of the record. Conventional office copiers are now extensively used, but microfilm has been the most used method for reproducing existing files. Some Federal agencies have used their own cameras or have arranged for the General Service Administration to do the filming on a cost reimbursable basis, whereas others have contracted with commercial companies that are equipped to do the job. When the vital records program was first initiated it was necessary to microfilm significant quantities of existing records to provide the copies for security storage. As time has passed, provision has been made for providing extra copies at the time records are created, and microfilm has been used less. There are at least three reasons for this decline:

1. Microfilming is more costly normally than providing an extra copy at the time the record is created;
2. Microfilm is relatively difficult to use, and in an emergency there might be real difficulty in providing necessary readers or reader-printers;
3. As long as the images are on a single reel of microfilm, only one person can use the reel at a time.

In certain circumstances, however, microfilming has merit in providing vital record copies. It can be done relatively quickly, it presents a minimum storage problem at the alternate or relocation site, and it is usually less costly than other reproduction processes where reproduction of existing documents is necessary. When vital records are maintained in machine-coded form, as for example on magnetic tape or on punched cards, consideration should be given to providing equipment for using the coded information. Stored records so coded also should be accompanied by a copy of the program or other information necessary to use them.

### **Evacuation of Official Files to Relatively Safe Locations**

Evacuation of vital records to a safe location is feasible when they are referred to very seldom, or when, after their immediate administrative purpose has been served, they will not be needed for a predictable or relatively long period of time. It may also be practicable when the emergency relocation site is in the immediate vicinity.

The particular method used in ensuring the availability of records depends on what records are to be available, to what extent their dispersal has been accomplished through normal procedures, and the relative costs of providing protection through the several available methods.

## **4. MECHANICS OF PROTECTING VITAL RECORDS**

After vital records have been identified and decisions made as to the best method of providing copies of them, the next question that arises is, where should they be stored.

For storage purposes, a distinction may be made between the two categories of vital records:

1. Records that are "vital to the essential functions of the Federal Government for the duration of an emergency if this country is attacked" should be available at the department or agency relocation sites.

These are the emergency operating records.

2. Records that are essential to the preservation of rights and interests of individual citizens and of the Government require special protection but need not be at relocation sites. The sites chosen for such records should be relatively safe, but often these records are voluminous and it may be impracticable to keep them at relocation sites.

Records that should be at the relocation site need not necessarily be stored within the same facility but they must be accessible to it under emergency conditions. Records that would be needed in West Virginia should not be stored in North Dakota. Transportation and communication facilities would be at a premium during an emergency, and they should not be used in transporting or transmitting records that could have been stored at a more accessible location.

Many commercial companies have either built special repositories in sparsely populated areas or have rented space in one of the several commercially-operated vaults in abandoned mines or tunnels. For the most part the Federal agencies have not gone into commercial space. Rather they store their vital records at conveniently located emergency relocation sites, often underground, designed to protect against almost any force except direct nuclear blast. The hazard of radiological fallout requires adequate shielding of those records required during the first few days.

Another element in the choice of location must be the storage facilities that are available or can be made available. Certain stored documents are likely to be security classified, so at least some of the space or equipment that is used should be approved by the agency security officer for storage of documents of the specified degree or classification.

Continued maintenance of the vital records is more dependent on the care taken in labelling and shipping the files than on the space and equipment.

There are many factors to be considered in this apparently simple operation, some of which are not so simple in fact:

### **Point of Collection**

There must be a clear-cut determination as to the organizational levels at which vital records will be collected, packaged, and organized at the storage point. In large Federal agencies this may be at the bureau level, with subpoints within the bureau; in other cases it may be at the branch or section level. In any event, there must be a specific person responsible for seeing that the records of a given unit or group of units are collected and forwarded, and the records almost inevitably must be organized at the storage site in accordance with the units forwarding them. Only in this way can all the vital records be made available promptly to the unit responsible for a given function in an emergency. If all the records of a department or agency are intermixed, there may be a major segregation job before any emergency activities can begin.

### **Packaging**

Records should be placed in appropriate folders, envelopes, or bundles small enough to handle easily. In the case of security-classified materials, the envelopes or bundles should be of such size that they will fit into legal or letter size safe-type file equipment or on shelves in a vault area. In addition, records of only one organizational unit should be in the same envelope, folder, package, or carton, and all of the records in a given file unit should be disposable at the same time. Many agencies provide that employees stationed regularly at the relocation site are not permitted to open an envelope, folder, or bundle, so that records which are to be replaced quarterly, semi-annually, or at some other period should not be in the same bundle with records not replaceable at the same intervals.

### **Marking and Numbering Packages**

Each package must be marked and numbered so that it can easily be identified. Preprinted labels are available that, when the blank spaces are filled in, give all the information necessary for handling the materials (see figure 2). The information provided on the labels is keyed to an inventory which gives complete information.

### **Inventory or Master List**

Usually each collecting point is responsible for preparing an inventory of the records to be stored, and provision is made for checking the inventory at least semiannually. Copies of the inventory are retained by the collecting point, by the person responsible for the program in the agency, and at the relocation site. In the system used by the General Services Administration, this inventory is the key to using the records. The item number on the package labels simply refers to a number on the inventory. Separate forms may be provided for emergency operating records and rights and interests records so that, if necessary, the records can be stored at separate locations. Inventories contain not only a description of the records but also information as to replacement of the files and other necessary data (see figure 2).

The inventories are normally prepared by appropriate program officials creating vital records, reviewed by records officers, and approved by defense coordinators, or others, prior to transfer of the records to security storage.

### **Security Designations**

Where records are security-classified, they must be packaged, wrapped, and marked as

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION INVENTORY OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS RECORDS (EMERGENCY OPERATING RECORDS)						PAGE OF PAGES	
PREPARED BY (Name of Program Official)		DATE	REVIEWED BY (Signature of S/SO Records Officer)		DATE	APPROVED BY (Signature of SSI Defense Coord.)	
ITEM NO. (1)	ITEM IDENTIFICATION (Name, description, subject, form no., reports control symbol, etc.) (2)	SITE LOCATION (3)			NAME OR TITLE AND CORRESPONDING COPIES TO SITE (4)	FREQUENCY OF DISPATCH (5)	SITE MAINTENANCE AND DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS (6)
		MAIN	CO	RO			

(Instructions on reverse)

GSA FORM MAR 67 1656

TO		<input type="checkbox"/> DEPOSITORY <input type="checkbox"/> MAIN SITE <input type="checkbox"/> CO SITE <input type="checkbox"/> RO SITE		ITEM NO.
FROM (Agency)	SERVICE/STAFF OFFICE	<input type="checkbox"/> CO <input type="checkbox"/> RO		DATE
FREQUENCY OF DISPATCH				
ITEM IDENTIFICATION				
ITEM MAINTENANCE AND DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS				

IDENTIFICATION LABEL - PREPOSITIONED RECORDS GSA FORM MAR 67 1656B  
DETACH

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING GSA FORM 1656B

**TO.** Check site destination. All items on GSA Form 1656A are forwarded to the GSA Vital Records Depository. GSA emergency site locations are shown in column 3 of GSA Form 1656. If regional office site, include the number designation for that region.

**ITEM NO.** Same as entry in column 1, GSA Form 1656 or 1656A as appropriate.

**AGENCY.** Enter "GSA".

**SERVICE/STAFF OFFICE.** Enter office symbol or name of service or staff office and check Central Office of regional square as appropriate. If regional office, show number designation for the region.

**DATE.** Enter date material is packaged and forwarded.

**FREQUENCY OF DISPATCH.** Same as entry in column 5 of GSA Form 1656 or column 4 of GSA Form 1656A as appropriate.

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION.** Same as entry in column 2 of GSA Form 1656 or GSA Form 1656A as appropriate.

**ITEM DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS.** Same as entry in column 6 of GSA Form 1656 or column 5 of GSA Form 1656A as appropriate.

Figure 2. Samples of Inventory Forms and Label

required by security regulations of the agency. Only in this way can proper handling be assured in transmission and storage.

### **Transfer to Storage**

Normally records are not transferred to relocation sites on a daily basis (unless the material is of the utmost importance) but on a weekly, monthly or other basis, particularly if the sending of a special messenger is involved. Provision for interim storage in local vault or other suitable space is desirable. In some cases it may be appropriate to arrange with the local postmaster at the relocation site to receive and hold unclassified materials for temporary storage in a post office vault or safe. Periodically the material may then be picked up and moved to the storage site. If the agency security officer approves, this same system can be used for classified materials, but before such approval is given, an inspection of the postal facilities is usually required.

### **Storage**

At the relocation site the records are usually arranged on an organizational basis (by collecting points, as noted above) and thereunder chronologically by date of receipt or numerically by inventory number.

### **Rotation of Records**

Records are retained at the site in accordance with instructions on the package labels or on the inventory sheets. If new shipments are to replace old records, this fact must be clearly indicated, and the envelopes, folders, bundles, or cartons of records to be destroyed should be destroyed on the spot, or they may be returned to the collecting point for destruction there. Similarly, when supplementary materials are received at the relocation site, their relationship to materials already there should be clearly set forth on the package label and on the inventory.

### **Responsible Custody**

Some individual must be responsible for maintaining the records in storage. It may be impracticable or unnecessary to station files personnel at the storage point at all times. In such event, someone will need to make periodic trips to file additional materials in their proper places, to remove disposable files, and to ensure the continued proper maintenance of the vital records.

If all of the above factors have been considered, when either a test alert or a real emergency occurs, the vital records should be ready for use. The records should be in such shape that they can be made available immediately, and there should be no need to search through obsolete files to find current records.

## **5. GOVERNMENT-WIDE USE OF GSA'S VITAL RECORDS DEPOSITORY**

The General Services Administration maintains an underground Vital Records Depository suitable for safeguarding emergency preparedness records of all Federal executive departments and agencies. Its use is optional. Established primarily for the protection of vital records of the rights and interests category on a Government-wide basis, this facility also accepts emergency operating records (those normally maintained at the individual department or agency relocation sites), particularly "second" or "insurance" copies. The option of deciding whether this Depository is an appropriate site for storage of emergency operating records is one for each department or agency. The Federal judicial and legislative branches of Government are also invited to use this facility for storage of their preparedness records.

The protective physical features of the Depository conform to criteria established for agency relocation sites for National emergency operations. It is centrally located in the United States, accessible to motor, rail, and air trans-

portation. Atmospheric conditions within are ideal for proper storage of photographic film, magnetic tape, as well as paper records. An air conditioning system, with auxiliary stand by power feature, controls its temperature and humidity. Built-in automatic sprinklers provide fire protection.

The Depository operates as an annex to the Federal Records Center, Kansas City, Missouri. It provides essentially the same records services as do the other Federal records centers, as are explained in the GSA Handbook, Federal Records Centers, Federal Stock Number 7610-298-6904, except as set forth below.

The Depository performs the following services for Federal departments and agencies without cost reimbursement:

1. Receives and stores vital records on preinstalled shelving within the underground complex in the same basic arrangement as received, safeguarding them by appropriate measures on a 24-hour basis;

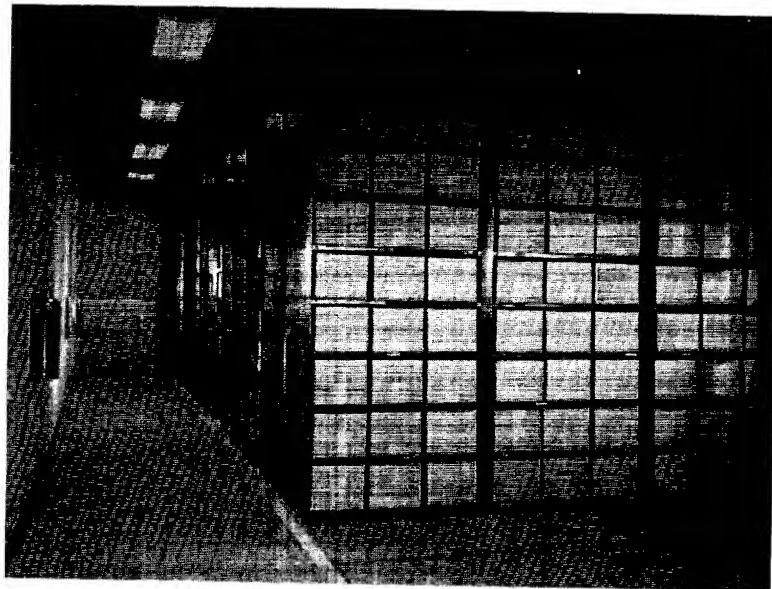


Figure 3. Underground Space Occupied by the Vital Records Depository, Exterior and Interior Views



2. Makes the records available for use as early as practicable after receipt, answering inquiries about them as authorized;
3. Adds, replaces, withdraws, destroys, or returns records, as appropriate, usually on an unopened container basis.

Departments or agencies using the Depository should:

1. On initial transfers, provide the name, address, and telephone number of officials having primary responsibility for the transferred records, and designate, in writing, officials authorized to order disposition and to inspect or otherwise have access to the records (providing specimen signatures);
2. For each shipment of records transferred, show the highest defense classification on the inner container of each packaged file item;
3. Provide any special instructions or assistance concerning arrangement, service, or maintenance of the records, if required;
4. Bear the costs of shipping records to and from the Depository.

To help facilitate handling transfers at the Depository, a completed inventory or descriptive list of the records (in duplicate) should accompany each shipment, or be mailed in advance. One copy will be signed and returned as a receipt for the shipment. For future reference to the records, it will show an accession number assigned by the Depository. Standard Form 135, Records Transmittal and Receipt, and Standard Form 135A (Continuation Sheet), if needed, may be used for this purpose, or the using agency's own vital records forms may be used (see figure 2 for examples). A memorandum or letter will also suffice. The particular forms used are not important so long as adequate information is furnished.

Standard size transfer cartons are available for shipping records to the Depository. Departments and agencies are encouraged to use these cartons because of their compatibility with the uniform-size shelving installed at the Depository. The cartons have inside dimensions of 10 by 12 by 15 inches and hold each one cubic foot of either letter or legal size records. Standard cartons may be obtained by requisition from the nearest Federal Supply Service depot (Federal Stock Number 8115-290-3379), or at no cost from the nearest General Services Administration Federal records center. Half-size cartons are also avail-

able at no cost from the Federal records centers. These measure approximately 5 by 10 by 15 inches inside.

Records will be handled at the Depository in accordance with instructions provided on the inventories furnished or on the individual packaged items (inner container labels). Replaced records will be burned at the Depository or returned as instructed.

The updating of records prepositioned at the Depository is best accomplished by substituting unopened containers of current records for like containers of obsolete records. This technique should be used to the maximum extent practicable to help minimize, at the Depository, such time consuming and costly operations, for example, as changing, correcting, or interfiling individual documents. Uniform processing at designated agency vital records assembly or collection stations is essential to effective and economical use of this technique.

This means that the department and agency stations should package separately all records readily identifiable as a unit, label each package with an identification label similar to the one shown in figure 2 (or otherwise relate the packages to the inventories), place them in records transfer cartons (or otherwise repack-age them), and address them for shipment to the Depository, as follows:

For Shipments Via Postal Channels:

Federal Records Center Annex, GSA  
Post Office Box 141  
Neosho, Missouri 64850

For shipments Via Commercial

Motor or Rail Freight:

Federal Records Center Annex, GSA  
Ozark Terminal  
Neosho, Missouri 64850

Prior to initial use of the Depository, departments and agencies are asked to sign a "Records Transfer Agreement," covering essentially the conditions outlined above plus any special ones (subject to negotiation) which are mutually agreeable. Agency officials requiring any additional information about the Depository, or a copy of the specified agreement, should communicate with:

Regional Director, NARS  
General Services Administration  
1500 East Bannister Road  
Kansas City, Missouri 64131

Representatives of departments or agencies in the Washington area who are interested in transferring vital records to this depository are invited to contact:

General Services Administration  
National Archives and Records Service  
Office of Federal Records Centers—NC  
Washington, D.C. 20408



## 6. VITAL RECORDS PROTECTION STATUS REPORTING

The primary purpose of vital records status reporting is to provide current information for the Office of Emergency Planning to evaluate overall readiness of the Federal executive departments and agencies in safeguarding records needed for emergency operations. It is also instituted as a reminder to such departments and agencies that their programs should be reviewed periodically for possible improvement.

Instructions requiring submission of the vital records protection status reports are set forth in the Federal Property Management Regulations (41 CFR Part 101-11).

Status reports in two parts, covering both emergency operating records and rights and interests records (see figures 4, 5, and 6 for forms used), are submitted by departments and agencies to the General Services Administration, National Archives and Records Service, Office of Federal Records Centers—NC, Washington, D. C. 20408. The reports are reviewed and transmitted to the Office of Emergency Planning for overall evaluation and appropriate action.

Reports are required for each individual vital records program. Generally, this means that the smaller independent agencies will prepare a single consolidated report. Larger agencies and cabinet departments will prepare an individual report for each large component (e.g., bureau, service, administration, or office). Regional or field program reports shall be incorporated within the reports for bureau level or above before being transmitted to GSA.

The reports should reflect any outstanding recommendations and actions to be taken concerning vital records arising out of overall records management program evaluations conducted within the reporting department or agency by the National Archives and Records Service.

The reports should provide in the answers or in attachments appropriate comments as to conditions and planned improvements, essentially as follows:

### Plans and Facilities

Has your agency developed plans for preserving and providing operational and safe locations for storing its vital records? If not, what corrective actions will be taken during this year?

### Programs

Has your agency developed an on-going program to preserve and prelocate its vital records? If not, what stopgap plans are going to be used in an emergency and what corrective actions will be taken this year?

### Readiness

If a nuclear attack were to occur, would your agency have the required vital (operating) records to carry on emergency operations at alternate facilities? If not, what corrective actions will be taken this year?

### Recovery

Have the vital (rights and interests) records of your agency been prepositioned at safe and accessible locations from where they can be recalled as needed during recovery? If not, what corrective actions will be taken this year? Each report is to be complete in itself and supersedes the previous report. The reports should be security classified appropriate to the degree of classified information they contain.

The reports are to be submitted in duplicate annually, as of June 30, and are due in GSA within 10 workdays thereafter. Special advisory reports should be prepared and submitted whenever a significant change occurs in the status or location of the records protected.

Limited quantities of the illustrated reporting forms are available at no charge from GSA Region 3, Office of Administration, Administrative Services Division—3 BRD, Washington, D. C. 20407.

<b>GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION</b> <b>NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE</b> <b>VITAL RECORDS PROTECTION STATUS REPORT</b> <b>(PART I - EMERGENCY OPERATING RECORDS)</b>	1. PROGRAM STATUS AS OF (Month, day, year)																																				
<b>INSTRUCTIONS</b> Please submit this report in duplicate to the address shown below. This report shall be prepared for bureau level or above and shall incorporate subordinate unit program reports before being submitted to GSA. Use plain bond paper to complete any report items.																																					
<b>TO:</b> General Services Administration National Archives and Records Service Office of Federal Records Centers Washington, D.C. 20408																																					
2. DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY	3. BUREAU OR SERVICE																																				
4. REPORT COVERS <input type="checkbox"/> a. TOTAL ORGANIZATION <input type="checkbox"/> b. OTHER (Specify)																																					
5. ADDRESS OF REPORTING OFFICE (Number, street, city, State and code)																																					
<b>OVER-ALL PROGRAM STATUS</b>																																					
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th rowspan="2" style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">O B J E C T I V E S</th> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">CHECK ONE</th> </tr> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">COMPLETE (1)</th> <th style="text-align: center;">INCOMPLETE (2)</th> </tr> <tr> <td>a. PLANS FOR PRESERVING EMERGENCY OPERATING RECORDS</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>b. EMERGENCY ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANNING RECORDS (READINESS) PRELOCATED</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>c. EMERGENCY SUBSTANTIVE AND PROCEDURAL RECORDS (OPERATING) PRELOCATED</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>d. RECORDS NOT PRELOCATED MARKED FOR EMERGENCY MOVEMENT</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>e. EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR USE OF PRELOCATED RECORDS PROVIDED</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		O B J E C T I V E S	CHECK ONE		COMPLETE (1)	INCOMPLETE (2)	a. PLANS FOR PRESERVING EMERGENCY OPERATING RECORDS			b. EMERGENCY ORGANIZATIONAL AND MANNING RECORDS (READINESS) PRELOCATED			c. EMERGENCY SUBSTANTIVE AND PROCEDURAL RECORDS (OPERATING) PRELOCATED			d. RECORDS NOT PRELOCATED MARKED FOR EMERGENCY MOVEMENT			e. EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR USE OF PRELOCATED RECORDS PROVIDED																		
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e. EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR USE OF PRELOCATED RECORDS PROVIDED																																					
7. STATUS OF RECORDS OF MAJOR PARTICIPATING UNITS <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 40%;"></th> <th style="width: 20%;">COMPLETE NO.</th> <th style="width: 20%;">INCOMPLETE NO.</th> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </table>		COMPLETE NO.	INCOMPLETE NO.				8. PERCENT OF OVER-ALL PROGRAM COMPLETED AND MAINTAINED CURRENT PERCENT																														
	COMPLETE NO.	INCOMPLETE NO.																																			
9. MAJOR LOCATION(S) OF PROTECTED RECORDS <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">UNITS OF ORIGIN</th> <th style="width: 25%;">ADDRESSES</th> <th style="width: 10%;">SPACE PROTECTED</th> <th style="width: 15%;">IN, OR ACCESSIBLE TO, EMERGENCY OPERATING FACILITY</th> <th style="width: 10%;">RECORDS IN USABLE FORM</th> <th style="width: 15%;">RECORDS COMPLETE</th> </tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </table>		UNITS OF ORIGIN	ADDRESSES	SPACE PROTECTED	IN, OR ACCESSIBLE TO, EMERGENCY OPERATING FACILITY	RECORDS IN USABLE FORM	RECORDS COMPLETE																														
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10. PROGRAM REVIEWED <input type="checkbox"/> a. ANNUALLY <input type="checkbox"/> b. SEMIANNUALLY <input type="checkbox"/> c. OTHER (Specify)																																					
11. GIVE REASON(S) FOR UNCOMPLETED PROGRAM ACTIONS FOR EACH ITEM INCOMPLETE UNDER ITEMS 6 AND 8.	12. LIST DEFINITIVE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN THIS FISCAL YEAR AND INTERIM STOP-GAP MEASURES FOR EACH ITEM INCOMPLETE UNDER ITEMS 6 AND 8.																																				


REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOL GS-36

GSA FORM APR 68 2034

Figure 4. Status Report Form for Emergency Operating Records

<b>GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION</b> <b>NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE</b> <b>VITAL RECORDS PROTECTION STATUS REPORT</b> <b>(PART II - RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RECORDS)</b>		1. PROGRAM STATUS AS OF (Month, day, year)	
<b>INSTRUCTIONS</b> Please submit this report in duplicate to the address shown below. This report is to be filled-out for the same reporting element for which GSA Form 2034, dealing with emergency operating records, was completed.			
<b>TO:</b> General Services Administration National Archives and Records Service Office of Federal Records Centers Washington, D.C. 20408			
2. DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY		3. BUREAU OR SERVICE	
4. REPORT COVERS <input type="checkbox"/> a. TOTAL ORGANIZATION <input type="checkbox"/> b. OTHER (Specify)			
5. ADDRESS OF REPORTING OFFICE (Number, street, city, State and code)			
<b>OVER-ALL PROGRAM STATUS</b>			
OBJECTIVES		CHECK ONE	
		COMPLETE (1)	INCOMPLETE (2)
a. PLANS FOR PRESERVING RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RECORDS			
b. APPROPRIATE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RECORDS OF DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY EMPLOYEES PRESERVED			
c. APPROPRIATE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RECORDS OF PUBLIC (CITIZENRY) PRESERVED			
d. APPROPRIATE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS RECORDS OF DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY PRESERVED			
7. STATUS OF RECORDS OF MAJOR PARTICIPATING UNITS	COMPLETE NO.	INCOMPLETE NO.	8. PERCENT OF OVER-ALL PROGRAM COMPLETED AND MAINTAINED CURRENT <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 100px;"></div> PERCENT
9. MAJOR LOCATION(S) OF RECORDS DEPOSITORIES			(YES OR NO)
UNIT OF ORIGIN	ADDRESSES		SPACE PROTECTED
			RECORDS COMPLETE
10. PROGRAM REVIEWED <input type="checkbox"/> a. ANNUALLY <input type="checkbox"/> b. SEMIANNUALLY <input type="checkbox"/> c. OTHER (Specify)			
11. GIVE REASON(S) FOR UNCOMPLETED PROGRAM ACTIONS FOR EACH ITEM INCOMPLETE UNDER ITEMS 6 AND 8.		12. LIST DEFINITIVE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN THIS FISCAL YEAR AND INTERIM STOP-GAP MEASURES FOR EACH ITEM INCOMPLETE UNDER ITEMS 6 AND 8.	
REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOL GS-37			
GSA FORM APR 68 2035			

**Figure 5. Status Report Form for Rights and Interests Records**

13. DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS AT LOCATION(S)	
LIST OF RECORDS BY GENERAL HEADINGS OR GROUPINGS a.	RECORDING MEDIUM (Paper, microfilm, punch-cards, etc.) b.
	
14. REPORTED BY (Official responsible for Vital Records Program)	
SIGNATURE	NAME AND TITLE (Please print)
ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT	TELEPHONE NO. (Or code) AND EXT.
GSA DC 68.13015	
GSA FORM APR 68 2034 BACK	


13. DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS AT LOCATION(S)	
LIST OF RECORDS BY GENERAL HEADINGS OR GROUPINGS a.	RECORDING MEDIUM (Paper, microfilm, punch-cards, etc.) b.
	
14. REPORTED BY (Official responsible for Vital Records Program)	
SIGNATURE	NAME AND TITLE (Please print)
ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT	TELEPHONE NO. (Or code) AND EXT.
GSA DC 68.13016	
GSA FORM APR 68 2035 BACK	

Figure 6. Reverse of GSA Forms 2034 and 2035

## 7. ENSURING ADEQUACY OF THE PROGRAM

What appears on paper to be the best possible program for the protection of vital records will represent virtually a complete waste of time and effort if it is not kept up-to-date.

To ensure that the program is adequate, it must be simple and economical, and it should be reviewed at least annually. Vital records inventories should be reviewed for adequacy in terms of any new or revised program responsibilities.

As has already been indicated, in determining what are vital records there are two conflicting tendencies to be reconciled:

1. The tendency of most people to over-emphasize the value of the tasks they are performing and consequently to earmark too many records as vital records, and
2. The tendency of people to forget that when someone else must perform their vital functions, that other person will not have the benefit of all the information in their own minds.

The records must be complete enough to enable a person relatively new to the job to carry it out, and they must be few enough to make a continuing program practical.

Federal agencies have found that, as in the case of private companies, the percentage of all their records that deserve designation as vital records will vary with the functions they are to perform, but that in any event the percentage will be relatively small. On an average not more than 1 or 2 percent at most of the total holdings are vital records. Accordingly, optimum protection should be provided.

Care should be taken to avoid developing overly elaborate programs to safeguard too many records so that they can be continued indefinitely without running into budget or procedural difficulties.

The vital records reporting system provides full information on the status of the program, the persons responsible for specific activities, and the nature and whereabouts of the key records. The information, which should be kept where it is available as well as safe, will be needed not only at the agency relocation site, but also where it can be used by the relocation officers and others responsible for planning, directing, and reviewing emergency activities.

Among the data needed are the specific locations of the vital records. In an emergency it would not be sufficient to know only the name

of the city where the records are held. If only this were known by the official needing the records the emergency might well be over before the records were found.

Similarly, if records are kept at several locations, the person needing them wants to know which files are at which location so that he can get what he wants with a minimum of delay.

In addition, names and addresses should be kept of several people who know about the program, preferably people at different locations. This is done on the theory that the same disaster that made necessary recourse to the records might also eliminate the officials at any single location who know about the program.

Unless this information is reviewed regularly and kept current it may be of no value in time of emergency.

Valuable information for improving the program can be obtained by testing it under simulated emergency conditions. Such tests are also useful to instill in the participants a sense of the meaning and importance of preparedness. These should be designed to disclose, among other things, that:

1. Records essential to carrying out assigned responsibilities are protected;
2. Records are current and can be located quickly and easily;
3. Records are sufficiently complete to permit persons other than regularly assigned employees to perform required tasks;
4. Methods and procedures relating to records transfers to security site(s), and their updating, are sufficient to ensure smooth operation;
5. Lines of program supervision and organization are clearly shown in the records and understood by those assigned emergency responsibilities.

Naturally such tests are not conclusive, but nonetheless they are among the best available means of ensuring program adequacy.

In conducting surveys of overall agency records management programs and practices, under authority of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, 63 Stat. 377, as amended, the General Services Administration (National Archives and Records Service) includes a review of agency programs for the protection of vital records.

## CHECKLIST

The questions are so worded that check marks in the NO column indicate the need for corrective action.

	YES	NO
1. Do you know the emergency mission of your organization?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are all records vital to your emergency mission stored at your relocation site or otherwise appropriately safeguarded?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are appropriate officials of your agency apprised of services available at GSA's Vital Records Depository?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are records at the relocation site kept current?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are they adequately arranged and listed or indexed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Are obsolete materials systematically removed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Are statements of emergency mission, delegations of authority, and predrafted emergency issuances available at relocation site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are adequate records of personnel there?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are voluminous records vital to eventual safeguarding of rights and interests maintained separate from emergency operating records either within the relocation site or elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Are records necessary to facilitate establishment of new programs at relocation site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Has the availability of any special equipment needed to use the records in the area been checked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Have field office plans been coordinated with central office plans?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Are you able adequately to monitor the program by available reports and inventories?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Are program status reports prepared and submitted annually?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Were the records at the relocation site adequate during the past test?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Is your program so simple and inexpensive that you anticipate no difficulties in keeping it up to date?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Are adequate security measures in effect for the program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Is your office's program in full operation and now capable of meeting emergency requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Appendix A—Vital Records (Checklist)

"CHECK LIST" FOR REVIEWING VITAL RECORDS

1. Are all records considered Vital to your Office on deposit? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Are the Vital Records Current? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Have obsolete records been withdrawn? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Could the Vital Records on deposit be put into two groups?
  - a. Those records needed for immediate use. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Those records that would not be needed for immediate use but would be used to reconstitute the Agency? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In the event it is necessary to evacuate from present relocation what records would be considered indispensable and would require moving? Consider available, to accomplish this move, only personnel and vehicles assigned to your office at relocation.
6. Are the Vital Record deposits presently on file in repository arranged in the most readily available form to provide the required information?
7. Are there on file in repository current punch card machine operating procedures and boards wired for ready use? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do the reels of microfilm include adequate indexing? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many frames of microfilm would require prints in the initial emergency period? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many frames of microfilm would require prints for reconstruction? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Are the current Vital Records deposit schedules complete? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Are you depositing any of the following:
  - a. Official Personnel Records? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Official Fiscal, Finance and Budget Records? \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Official Security Records? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Official Training Records? \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Official Medical Records? \_\_\_\_\_

It is not necessary for you to deposit the above as they are placed in the Repository by the respective office creating the document.

13. If you were forced to relocate today, do you feel your office could continue its essential operations with the Vital Records presently on deposit? \_\_\_\_\_